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ABSTRACT

In order to offer computer and/or technology instruction to their education students before they transfer to four-year colleges, Louisiana State University at Eunice (LSUE), a two-year college, added a computer component to an introductory education class. The component introduces pre-service teachers to electronic mail and the Internet in order to alleviate students' fears regarding the technology. Although computer utilization has become commonplace in elementary and secondary schools, research suggests that many pre-service teaching programs do not offer adequate training in computers. In LSUE's education class, assignments given to each student for the computer component included subscribing to Ednet, a listserv dedicated to education-related topics; responding to messages on Ednet; finding an electronic document on the Internet and emailing it to another location; responding to requests for information on Ednet; and unsubscribing from the listserv. Students were also asked to rate their Internet experience and indicate whether they would use it again in classes or by themselves. Sixty-four percent of the students rated their experience as good, 90% said that they would use it again for themselves, and another 90% said that they would use it in classes. Appendixes provide a list of sample Internet sites, electronic mail responses from teacher education professionals regarding computer components in their courses, and a list of advantages and disadvantages of electronic mail. (HAA)

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# Novices on the Net: An Introduction to Education Class Uses E-Mail and the Internet

By
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Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council for Occupational Education (St. Louis, MO, October 24-26, 1996).

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# Novices on the Net: An Introduction to Education Class Uses Email and the Internet

When teachers enter the classroom, they are expected to be knowledgeable or at least aware of the current technology; however, pre-service teachers are often not given the opportunity to experience the latest educational technology (Russett, 1995). Although many students are getting experience at the four-year colleges, they may not be getting the initial instruction they need at the community college level. Therefore, it is the responsibility of two-year institutions to offer computer and/or technology instruction to these education students before they transfer to a four-year college (Doucette, 1993). In response to this need, a computer component was added to the Introduction to Education classes at Louisiana State University at Eunice, a two-year college, during the Spring and Summer sessions of 1996. This presentation describes the addition of this component to the existing education curriculum.

## DESCRIPTION OF LSU-E AND THE COURSE

Louisiana State University at Eunice (LSU-E) is a community college in a rural area with an enrollment of approximately 2,500 to 3,000 students each semester. Because the college serves students from several parishes, the students often must commute several miles to come to school. Also, many students have part-time or full-time jobs, which make it difficult for many students to complete extra work at school.

The Introduction to Education course is an introductory course that focuses on current issues in education. Since the use of computers in the classroom is usually considered a current issue, this topic was added to the curriculum. Students enrolled in

this course are often asked to complete group and individual assignments for a participation grade; the computer component was averaged with the other participation activities for the total participation grade for the semester.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The main purpose of introducing pre-service teachers to e-mail and the Internet was to alleviate fears that these students may have had about this technology. Many students cringe when computers are mentioned. This negative response is usually due to a bad experience or lack of experience with computers. Therefore, one goal was to help the students become comfortable with the technology, so they would be able to learn different ways of working with it. "If we expect teachers to have a meaningful part in preparing students for the future, those teacher must first have a vision of the technology of the future and be comfortable with that technology" (Russett, 1995). One caution, however, is over stimulation or lack of proper training when working with novices. I found that to be true in my class, and I found that others have had the same experience (Appendix A). Often a zealous instructor may overlook good pedagogy, which may cause damage in the long-run. Therefore, when teaching about technology, instructors must be careful to abide by the good teaching procedures they would use in other courses.

Computer utilization seems to have become common place in many elementary and secondary schools; however, it has been suggested in the research that many pre-service teaching programs are not offering adequate training in computers (Russett, 1995; Resta, 1993; Moursund, 1989). If the programs do require a computer course, it is usually one computer literature course that has nothing to do with the "real-life"

classroom (Resta, 1993). Since technology moves rather rapidly and research rather slowly, I, in the spirit of technology, contacted the listserv ednet and asked the subscribers if the colleges and universities with which they are affiliated offer courses in technology. The results of that request suggest that computer courses are being offered to pre-service teachers in many areas of the country ( Appendix C). In addition, a recent study was done that investigated the use of technology in the pre-service teaching programs at several colleges and universities. This study showed that more than 91% of the institutions require courses in technology in their pre-service programs (Vagle, 1995).

Although it appears that technology may now be in the forefront of teacher training, there are some problems that those in higher education must face before these courses are effectively incorporated into the curricula. Funding is often a problem in higher education, and the education department is usually at the end of the line. Because of this, these departments may receive second-hand equipment or limited support from administration. Also, many facility do not receive incentives for initiating and continuing these courses (Resta, 1993).

James Russett (1995) suggests that there are several concerns education faculty must address when incorporating technology into a pre-service teacher training program. First, the technology must not replace the teacher. The teacher must remain available and willing to assist students in and out of the classroom. When using e-mail as a communication device, instructors may redirect all correspondence to the computer and do little face-to-face conferencing. Instructors must consider several advantages and disadvantages before using e-mail in the classroom (Appendix D). Secondly, interest may wane for many students and even the instructor, so make sure e-mail is being used

and messages are sent each week to all of the students. Also, try to respond promptly to messages. An advantage of e-mail is that it is more convenient and accessible than calling of waiting by an office. If instructors do not promptly answer e-mail, the students may become frustrated and not use it. Thirdly, netiquette (etiquette on the net) must be observed by the instructor and the students. Set up the ground rules at the beginning of the semester and stick to them throughout the assignments. All problems may not be foreseen; however, many can be address at the beginning of class so that there is no confusion about the rules later. Also, it is helpful to ask the MIS director at your school if there are any general rules in the computer room. Fourthly, many students are not used to working with computers, so they do not know how to troubleshoot when there is a problem. Often, simple problems that could have been easily solved cause students to lose interest or form negative attitudes about technology. Finally, many times the technology training at the university does not match the level of technology use in the school system. Pre-service teacher training programs should not only consider what is required of teachers throughout the country but also what is required in their region.

Educators must restructure the classrooms and pre-service teacher training programs in order to meet the needs of current and future students. Universities and colleges must accept the need for technology in education and develop courses that will train future teachers to not only use the technology but think critically to apply the knowledge to new and different situations. Courses in technology must also be added to the state certification requirements (Resta, 1993). The role of teacher and student must be changed if technology is to be incorporated in the classroom. Clerical tasks, such as grading and attendance, can be done with the computer. This will allow the teacher to

become a facilitator and concentrate more on teaching strategies and student needs (Doucette, 1993). Finally, students should have unlimited access to the technology and be able to use it effectively in a variety of ways. For example, students can use technology to create art, conduct presentations, compose literature and correspond with others around the globe. If technology is to be a part of the educational process, training must begin in the pre-service teacher training courses.

## COMPUTER ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments started with a simple e-mail response and grew to using the Internet and e-mail. After the third week of the semester, an assignment was given each week . The students were advised to complete the assignment and either send it through e-mail or print it.

**ASSIGNMENT ONE—Subscribe to ednet**

Access e-mail (This was demonstrated to them in an earlier class.)

1. On the **to:** line type listproc@lists.umass.edu
3. leave the subject line blank
4. On the text area type Subscribe EDNET Type in your name
5. Wait for a response
6. Print out response
7. Make sure the dial at the table is on your printer.
8. click on the print button
9. Hold on to these directions--you will need them later

**ASSIGNMENT TWO—Introduce yourself to the class**

1. Access e-mail
2. on the **to:** click on the mailing list under options
3. In the message area, type your name, your favorite food, a hobby

**ASSIGNMENT THREE—Respond to a message on ednet**

1. Find a message that interests you on ednet.
2. go to the bottom of the page and type your message
3. click the respond button
4. print out your response when it shows up on the list

**ASSIGNMENT FOUR—Question to the class**

1. What do you think about talking about prayer in the schools? Should we go back to having a prayer at the beginning of the day?
2. Address your responses to the group or respond to just me if you don't want the group to see your response-- type in my e-mail address on the **to:** line. My e-mail address is scorl1@lsueccgt.lsue.edu

**ASSIGNMENT FIVE—First Internet assignment**

This assignment will not be due until February 23rd. Print out these directions so you can follow them through the steps. This assignment is a big one, so let me know if you have trouble with it. If you can, try to work with someone else.

1. Press the reset button on the hard drive. This button is right in front of you.
2. Type number 1 for Internet
3. At the C prompt [ c:\>] type win
4. Take your mouse and put the arrow on the Netscape icon and click the left button twice quickly. An hourglass should come on the screen instead of an arrow.
5. The Netscape window will come up.
6. Look at the top of the screen where it say "Location:" There is an http:// number there. Put the mouse arrow before the http and click the left button. Hit the delete key until all of the letters are out of that window.
7. Now type http://www.fred.net/nhhs/nhhs.html and hit enter
8. Look at the bottom of the screen to see if you are connecting--it will tell you. It takes a few minutes; sometimes graphics slow down the process.
9. A screen with North Hagertown High school should come up.
10. Navigate through the window with the buttons at the top of the screen. [ ex. back, forward, home]
11. Look at the right of the screen. There should be an arrow at the top and an arrow at the bottom. You use these to move up and down.
12. Arrow down to "our essays." This should be in blue. You can click on to anything in blue and get more information; this is called a link. When you move the mouse to "our essays" you should see the arrow turn into a hand. that means you can click on to that.
13. After you click on to "our essays," go down to Project #1 Martin Luther King and click that
14. Click any of the blue essays on this window.
15. Print the essay. You will find the print key at the top or the screen. Make sure the button is turned to your computer letter and the button on the top that says on line is lit. To get the paper out, you can hit the "on line" button then hit "form feed." After you get the paper out, hit the "on line' button again.
16. Click twice on the upper left button on the screen. This will get you out.
17. Click on file at the top of your screen
18. Click on Mail Document
19. You are mailing your response to nhhs@fred.net
20. Make sure you include your e-mail address
    your login name@novell-1.lsue.edu

Good Luck! Let me know if you have trouble. This is a major assignment, but you have plenty of time to do it.

**ASSIGNMENT SIX—Net search**

1. Go to Internet access like you did with the last assignment.
2. When you get to Netscape, you will find a button that says Net Search
3. Click on that button with your mouse.
4. There will be a dark box with a button next to it that says "search"
5. Click on the box with your mouse.
6. Type a topic in the box. Ex. early childhood education, gender bias, school prayer. Type anything in which you are interested.
7. Click on the search button to the right of your topic
8. A list of topics (links) should come up.
9. Click on to a link (different color text--usually blue).
10. Print one page of the link

**ASSIGNMENT SEVEN—Question to the class**

1. Are you a role model? Should you worry if you have a beer at a festival where your students might see you? Should there be a conduct code outside of school?
2. Respond to the group or to me.

**ASSIGNMENT EIGHT—Respond to a request on ednet**

1. Respond to the post on ednet titled "preschools."
   [My wife and I have recently gained guardianship or our 4 year old niece. We will be looking for a preschool for her soon. Although I am an educator, I am unfamiliar with the field of early childhood education. What questions would you suggest we ask as we visit possible preschools?
2. You can respond to the listserv or to our class or to me.

**ASSIGNMENT NINE—Question to the class**

1. What is your opinion about discipline in the schools? Would you teach in a school that was known to be violent? What would you do if a fight broke out in your classroom? How would you handle a class that just will not sit still?
2. You may respond to the group or to me.

**ASSIGNMENT TEN--Internet**

1. Go to the Internet.
2. Go to this site http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/~mgd2u/educpage.html
3. This is a useful site because it has job listings and information about education web sites.
4. Respond to the class about what job you would like.

**ASSIGNMENT ELEVEN—Ednet and Internet**

1. Respond to the post about seating and print your response. These are the posts Paulson, Botelho, Walser and Nellen.

2. Read each of these posts and respond.
3. Also, visit this web site and respond to frig art (They have a response link at the bottom of the site. http://web.aimnet.com/~jennings/refrigerator/index.html

**ASSIGNMENT TWELVE—Unsubscribe to ednet**

1. Use the directions that you received at the beginning of the semester from ednet.
2. Find the directions about how to unsubscribe.
3. Unsubscribe to ednet.
4. Look up one of the "Cool Sites" (Appendix B) and comment about it.
5. Answer the following questions and send them to me on e-mail.
   How would you rate your Internet experience?
   Would you use it again for your class?
   Would you use it for yourself?

## STUDENT RESPONSE

It is often assumed that pre-service teachers who have had technology training would use that information when they enter the teaching profession (Russett, 1995). This assumption was true for the students enrolled in the 1996 spring and summer Introduction to Education classes. The following information describes how the students answered three general questions: 1. How would you rate your Internet experience? ; 2. Would you use it again for yourself? and 3. Would you use it for your class?.

A majority of the students felt that they had a good experience with the computers and that they would use them in the future and also use them in their classrooms: 64 percent of the students answered "good" for question number one; 25 percent answered fair; and ten percent answered poor. The students responded similarly for questions two and three: 90 percent answered yes to questions two and three; and ten percent answered no. The following information shows the specific student concerns regarding the computer assignments.

1. **How would you rate your Internet experience?**

*Positive Comments*

Made me want to go out and buy a computer
Took a friend to show her how to access
I succeeded, limited as it was
Husband will have to give me a turn now

*Negative Comments*

Had difficulty learning the computer
Had difficulty logging on
Too many assignments
Hate computers
Not enough time to use it (lab hours)
Hard for someone without computer experience

2. **Would you use it again for yourself?**

*Positive Comments*

Information was ready to access
Provides access to a wealth of knowledge
Use for research and projects
Use it to communicate with friends and relatives

*Negative Comments*

I would love to contact a friend, if I could get the thing to work
The whole thing does not interest me

3. ***Would you use it for your class?***

*Positive Comments*

To talk with teachers at other schools and around the world
Students will acquire a global mentality
Use for learning environment rather than only games
Use with censorship or monitor
With older children, but not younger
Get children familiar with technology
It is an essential tool for research
Makes learning more exciting

*Negative Comments*

Although four people said that they would not use it with their classes, they did not give any explanation.

## FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

There were many problems that the students faced while attempting to complete their assignments. One problem was the speed of the computers while accessing the Internet. Because of the limited speed, the student often had to wait long periods of time to access the Internet, or many times they were unable to get on the net. This caused many students to become frustrated; however, many said that they would continue to use it at the school or at another site. Students often assumed that the computers were not working if they were running slowly. Some of the problems with access may have been due to limited practice with an assistant present. The labs on campus are not staffed, so if students have trouble, they must ask another student in the lab or an available teacher. If no one is available, many students will quit instead of trying other solutions. This problem may also have been due to a lack of patience.

A major problem that confronted these classes was access to the computers. Many of the students did not have computers at home and had to use the school's computers. This posed a problem because of the limited space and times available. The campus has a computer lab hooked up to the Internet; however, it is not open on weekends, and the free times are limited during the week. The library is open a few hours on the weekends, but there are only two computers that are connected to the Internet.

There are several considerations for future use of computers in this course. One is the ephemeral nature of the Internet. Because URL numbers are subject to change, the students sometimes had difficulty finding the location of the assignment. To remedy this, I would allow the students to locate another URL if the one assigned is not found. Another problem was the amount of paper the students were using to print their assignments. Downloading may be an alternative to printing. The reason the students were instructed to print was mainly due to the slowness of the connection and my inexperience. When I began using computers in these classes, I had recently learned about e-mail and the Internet myself, so I was also a novice at this; we were all learning together.

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Appendix A

re: Currently, I am working as a teacher's assistant teaching teachers and students alike how to use the Internet and the practical benefits that can be gained from its use. I love my job; don't tell anyone, but I would do it for free if I could afford to do so.....! Now, many of the teachers I am working with know nothing of computers or the Internet. However, some of the teachers and students are quite knowledgeable and comfortable with existing hardware and software but are lost when it comes to the Internet.

In my enthusiastic way, I started to run way too fast when teaching about the different tools and possibilities that could be gained from using browsers like Netscape! As a result, the scorch marks that I left behind, burned my students out. This happened even with the teachers and students who were in some way comfortable with technology. Basically, what happened was, I lost them, their interest and found myself reeling with shock. Shock, Horror! What have I done I asked myself.....?

At the end of the day, the way I see it is that it is the human that is important, not the use of the technology or the use of the information. So now I'm starting from bottom, and taking my teachers and students through the use of the Internet, bit by bit, step by step. Hopefully, this way everyone will be able to keep up and maintain their level of interest. At the end of the day we are only human and making mistakes is part of being human. The smart person learns from mistakes made, the idiot doesn't (Jennings, 1996).

Appendix B

**COOL SITES**

1. ***Einstein Revealed***--about Einstein, educational games, timeline
   http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/nova/einstein/
2. ***Earthweek: A Diary or the Planet***-- weekly summary of natural occurrences
   http://www.slipnet.com/~earthenv/
3. ***Stamp on Black History***--created by high school students--features black American men and women who have been honored on postage stamps
   http://tqd.advanced.org/2667/
4. ***Hurricane Hunters***--experience with hurricane
   http://www.hurricanehunters.com/
5. ***Kendall Whaling Museum***
   http://www.kwm.org/
6. ***Apple Technology Research***
   http://www.info.apple.com/education/acot/index.html
7. ***Earth Day Sites***
   http://members.aol.com/EarthD1996/
   http://www.cam.org/~cdsl_ps/Earth_Day/earthday.htm
   http://www.envirolink.org/envirohome.html
   http://www.usgs.gov/education/
   http://www.tec.org/
8. ***Literature Sites***
   http://infoweb.magi.com/~forrest/index.html
   http://infoweb.magi.com/~forrest/ncf_poet.html
   http://www.etext.org/
   http://www.pix.za/barefoot.press/
   http//mikan.cc.matsuyama-u.ac.jp:80/~shiki
   http://www.onlineinc.com/OUtocs/outocmar.html
9. ***Peer Resources***--a nonprofit Canadian organization that supports mentoring and peer mediation programs in education and business, through training, courses, and research efforts.
   http://www.islandnet.com/~rcarr/profile.html
10. ***Metroscope***-- is a rapidly growing site that links you to cities all over the world.
    http://isotropic.com/metro/scope.html

Appendix C

## TEACHER RESPONSE

**My Post**

I have been reading articles about technology in teacher preparation courses and have found that many programs do not offer many computer or technology courses. I was wondering if any of you had computer training in your teacher prep courses, or if you teach these courses and offer a computer component. If computers are being used, how are they used--word processing, Internet activities, e-mail etc.?

**Responses**

*Brandon University in Canada*

- Have had computer training courses as part of our teacher education programs since 1981.
- At present we require a 3 cr. hr. course in the first semester that students are in a teacher preparation program.
- This course includes email, mailing lists, WWW, word-processing, spreadsheet, database and presentations using MS Office Pro 6.0
- These students also get training in educational software.

*Glenville State College in West Virginia*

- Try to integrate technology into the curriculum.
- Ed Psych course talks about computer assisted instruction in terms of programmed learning, so in that course, the students are exposed to educational software.
- Almost all of the courses require a word processor for one or more assignments
- Students give presentation using software such as PowerPoint
- We have a separate course for instructional technology but it is not required
- We have a long way to go, but we keep trying.

*Columbia University*

- I teach 4 courses about computing/Internet and instruction
- The first course is computer applications in education. In this course we cover word processing, spreadsheets, graphics, scanning, electronic mail, the WWW, publishing on the web and multimedia.

- The next three courses are 2 day courses covering the integration of the Internet into the educational environment--e-mail, WWW, Telnet, ftp, gopher and software applications needed to perform these services
- How to evaluate the content of the Internet
- How to design educational activities using the Internet

*Indiana State*

I am currently enrolled in my very first teaching preparation class. This class is divided into three different sections: observation, classroom, and computer. I think that the computer section is beneficial simply because it allows us to get a first hand look at comments and issues that educators are experiencing. Also, it encourages all teachers-to-be to become as computer literate as possible. In our computer classroom, there is a shortage of computers, so we are allowed to pair together to work and help each other out. Outside of the classroom, we use e-mail to keep in close contact with each other about assignments, and have super-quick access to talking with our professors, The extension of computers enhances teaching preparation 100%

*University of Arizona*

I am an adjunct instructor in Art Education. I have been using the Internet to supplement readings that are important. There are great art education sites with many online documents that I do not have to get copyright permission to have my students read. I also can demonstrate several art concepts or look at museum collections very easily. It is a wonderful tool, but about half of these students are not adept at using this tool.

*Houston*

We have a variety of tech prep classes and some of them use computers more than others. In addition, we are using portable computers, laptops and personal learning devices like the Brainchild for learning. We are using simulations of the net with the Classroom Internet programs in some of the schools that do not have full time access to the Internet.

Appendix D

# ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ELECTRONIC MAIL

| **Advantages** | **Reasons** |
|---|---|
| Enhances question and answer dialogue | Question and responses can be better organized by both the student and instructor |
| Saves instructor's time in classroom, in preparing handouts, broadcasting assignments | Eliminates typing, proofreading, duplication, and mail delays. Once composed, most handouts can be used in succeeding offerings with little or no alteration. |
| Saves student's time | No need to play telephone tag with instructor<br>No need to wait outside office while another student meets with instructor<br>Questions may be asked at any time.<br>No need to schedule appointments |
| Improves teaching assistant effectiveness | Teaching assistant may answer some and pass interesting or difficult questions to the instructor |
| Quality of instructor's lectures may improve | Instructor has a transcript of all electronic queries in a term. May review these to improve course presentation |

**Disadvantages**

*Instructors and students must have easy access to a terminal or personal computer.
*Instructors and students must be willing to spend a small amount of time learning how to use electronic mail.

(Downing, Schooley, Matz, Nelson, & Martinez, 1988, p. 249).